

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A

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SUBJECT: LABOR SITUATION AT PETROLEUM DEVELOPMENT (OMAN)

REF: KUWAIT 5249 (NOTAL)

1. IN OUR DISCUSSIONS WITH PETROLEUM DEVELOPMENT (OMAN) OFFICIALS, WE WERE ASSURED THAT WORKER ASSOCIATIONS WERE NOT MOVING TOWARD A DE FACTO TRADE UNION SETUP. WORKERS' COMMITTEES ARE RECOGNIZED BY PD(O) INTERNAL REGULATIONS BUT HAVE NOT BEEN GIVEN OFFICIAL BARGAINING STATUS BY OMANGOV. THE ASSOCIATIONS ARE ORGANIZED ON AN INFORMAL BASIS AND ARE DESIGNED MORE AS AN OUTLET FOR EMPLOYEE DISCONTENTS (USUALLY INVOLVING HOUSING, ALLOWANCES, AND TRANSPORTATION) THAN FOR ANY MANNER OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING OVER PAY OR PROMOTION.

2. WORKERS' COMMITTEES MEET MONTHLY IN ORDER TO DISCUSS EMPLOYEE COMPLAINTS AND EXPLAIN COMPANY POLICY. A YEARLY MEETING IS HELD TO CONFIRM WAGE REVISIONS, WHICH HAVE BEEN PRE-ARRANGED BY PD(O). MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS ARE SENT TO THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND LABOR.

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3. PD(O) PERSONNEL OFFICIALS REMARKED THAT MOST SIGNIFICANT

DISPUTES INVOLVE RELATIONS BETWEEN OMANI EMPLOYEES AND EXPATRIATE STAFF, RATHER THAN WORKERS AND PD(O) MANAGEMENT. INDIAN AND PAKISTANI EMPLOYEES (WHICH TOTAL 350, COMPARED TO 1200 OMANI STAFF AND 200 EUROPEAN EXPATRIATES) HAVE SEPARATE ASSOCIATION AND GENERALLY REFUSE TO MAKE COMMON CAUSE WITH OMANI WORKERS. OMAN GOVERNMENT ABETS THIS RIVALRY BY ENCOURAGING "OMANIZATION" OF MIDDLE MANAGEMENT AND PUTTING A CEILING ON ADVANCEMENT OF INDIANS AND PAKISTANIS. OMANI WORKERS HAVE ACCUSED PD(O) OF UNDULY FAVORING THE INDIAN AND PAKISTANI STAFF. THERE ARE ALSO RECURRING TENSIONS BETWEEN NATIVE OMANIS AND OMANI CITIZENS BORN IN EAST AFRICA, WHO ARE USUALLY BETTER EDUCATED AND MORE WESTERNIZED.

4. THORNIEST LABOR PROBLEM FOR PD(O) IS OBTAINING UNSKILLED OMANI WORKERS IN THE INTERIOR. ALL RECRUITMENT MUST BE DONE ON TRIBAL BASIS THROUGH LOCAL SHEIKHS. PD(O) ANTICIPATES EVEN MORE DIFFICULTIES AS IT EXPANDS ITS DRILLING PROGRAM IN SOUTHERN OMAN, SINCE DHOFARI TRIBESMEN ARE MOSTLY ILLITERATE AND HAVE HAD VIRTUALLY NO EXPOSURE TO MODERN INDUSTRY. A PD(O) OFFICIAL NOTED THAT THE COMPANY HAS ALREADY SUFFERED WORK STOPPAGES OVER GRIEVANCES IN THE INTERIOR BY TRIBAL WORKERS. WOLLE

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